

**Winter Storm
Incident Annex V
Colorado State Emergency Operations Plan**

LEAD AGENCY: Division of Emergency Management (DEM), Department of Local Affairs

SUPPORTING AGENCIES: Governor's Office, Agriculture, Human Services, Military and Veteran Affairs, Natural Resources, Public Safety, Transportation, Red Cross, Salvation Army, COVOAD, and Private Sector.

I. PURPOSE

This incident annex has been prepared to facilitate a coordinated response and assign responsibilities by state agencies to requests from local jurisdictions to reduce potential loss of life and to quickly restore essential services following a major winter storm.

II. POLICIES

Following the issuance of a local emergency declaration, the Governor may issue a state declaration, which may make response and recovery funding available as well as other state resources.

III. SITUATION

- A. All areas of Colorado are vulnerable to major winter storms. Isolation of rural towns and roadways presents the most significant danger to the largest number of people. Longtime residents of the area are usually well equipped to handle routine and even severe winter weather, but with the increase in tourists participating in outdoor winter recreation and the influx of new residents, we must plan for many unprepared people.
- B. Large-scale loss of life or property does not normally occur as a result of a winter storm, however, any persons caught out in the storm and stranded motorists are in extreme danger. Isolated homes are also a problem due to power shortages, lack of communications, and failure of heating sources. Loss of utilities in an urban area can create a critical situation in a short period of time for a large number of people. Medical assistance may become critical. The demand for emergency services poses the greatest difficulty, along with locating and rescuing stranded motorists. Emergency feeding of livestock may become necessary.
- C. Secondary effects of a large snowstorm must be planned for, i.e., avalanches, mudslides or flooding, landslides, dam failure, hazardous materials, power failure, subsidence, transportation disruption.

III. ASSUMPTIONS

- A. See Basic Plan
- B. This plan supports the Department of Transportation's plan for snow and ice removal.
- C. Winter storms will fluctuate in size and intensity and may become severe with little warning.
- D. A winter storm will usually affect the entire state to some degree, but severe impacts may be localized.
- E. Citizens will be advised of potential flood conditions through a variety of means, including: National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) radio, Emergency Alert System (EAS) broadcasts, standard radio announcements, TV announcements, etc.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

- A. Unlike some other types of emergencies or disasters, state resources will be involved in a response to a severe winter storm in their routine business. Local governments may request additional assistance when their capabilities and resources are exceeded. Such assistance, when authorized, will be provided by state agencies operating under their own authority, or as part of an effort coordinated by the Division of Emergency Management operating on behalf of the Governor. The Governor may declare part or all of the state a disaster and request assistance from the federal government if the capabilities and resources of both local and state governments are exceeded.
- B. State agencies will provide usual services in responding to a winter storm according to their internal policies. Only when a storm is of such magnitude that emergency declarations are necessary, will additional assistance be requested by the Division of Emergency Management. Safety of personnel is the priority during any storm response.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Governor's Office:
 - 1. Determine, directly or via delegation, when a winter storm is of such severity that it would be unsafe to have nonessential state workers respond to their jobs and to make the necessary announcements by radio and television.
 - 2. Following the state disaster statutes, make monies available through the state disaster fund or other funds to provide for basic recovery of essential life services.
 - 3. Authorize state active duty status for use of Colorado National Guard personnel to provide lifesaving assistance, if necessary.
 - 4. Activate the State Emergency Operations Plan

5. Declare a State of Disaster Emergency where appropriate.
- B. Division of Emergency Management:
1. Monitor weather forecasts and prepare to coordinate state assistance as needed.
 2. Coordinate state response to requests for assistance from local jurisdictions.
 3. Activate and staff the State Emergency Operations Center, if needed, and coordinate state assistance following established EOC procedures.
 4. Maintain communications with Governor's office, other state agencies and local jurisdictions regarding the status of the storm, available resources and recovery efforts.
- C. Department of Agriculture/Department of Natural Resources
1. Monitor weather conditions within the rural portion of the state.
 2. Maintain communications with rural agencies to conduct a situational assessment.
- D. Department of Human Services/American Red Cross/Salvation Army
1. DHS - Administer assistance programs including Individual & Family Grants Program.
 2. ARC/SA - Provide shelters and provisions for stranded people in accordance with internal procedures.
- E. Department of Public Safety/Colorado State Patrol:
1. Establish traffic control on state highways and determine need for road closures.
 2. Maintain communications and advise dispatch of current conditions in all areas of the state - these reports will be relayed, as needed, to the Division of Emergency Management.
 3. Assist in evacuation of stranded motorists/ population; preserve law and order.
- F. Department of Transportation
1. Effect snow removal, plowing, barricading, and ice removal and determine need for road closures.
 2. Maintain communications and advise dispatch of current conditions in all areas of the state - information will be relayed to the Division of Emergency Management, as needed.
 3. Upon notification of snow emergency conditions, provide crews and equipment to assist in snow removal, rescue operations, necessary transportation, establishment of barricades and restoration, as requested, in support of local jurisdictions when CDOT has the appropriate equipment.

4. Highways will be plowed and sanded according to a plan of priorities. Additional assistance will be prioritized to provide networks of roadways open to provide a transportation system for emergency vehicles such as fire department, law enforcement, and rescue personnel.
5. During severe snow or blowing snow (white outs), or other conditions that could endanger personnel, plowing and sanding can be suspended at the discretion of the CDOT Director.

G. Other State Agencies

Provide support as requested by the Division of Emergency Management.

VI. STORM WARNINGS¹

- A. Heavy Snow Warning - are issued when a snowfall of four (4) inches or more is expected within a 12-hour period or a fall of six (6) inches or more is expected within a 24-hour period.
- B. Blizzard Warnings - are issued when winds with speeds of at least 35 mph are accompanied by considerable falling or blowing snow and temperatures of 20 degrees F or lower are expected to prevail for an extended period of time.
- C. Severe Blizzard Warnings - are issued when blizzards of extreme proportions are expected and indicate wind with speeds of at least 45 mph plus a great density of falling or blowing snow and a temperature of 10 degrees F or lower.
- D. Cold Wave Warnings - indicate an expected rapid fall in temperature within a 24-hour period, which will require substantially increased protection to agricultural, industrial, commercial and social activities. The temperature falls and minimum temperatures required to justify cold wave warnings vary with the changing of the season and with geographic location. Regardless of the month or the section of the country, a cold wave warning is a red flag alert to the public that during a forthcoming forecast period a change to very cold weather will require greater than normal protective measures.
- E. Hazardous Driving (Travelers') Warnings - are issued to indicate that falling, blowing or drifting snow, freezing rain or drizzle, sleet or strong winds will make driving difficult.

¹A severe weather **Watch** is issued by the National Weather Service when conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop. A watch is usually issued for large areas involving many counties. A severe weather **Warning** is an urgent message to tell you that severe weather is imminent or is occurring.

- F. Stockmen's Warnings - alert ranchers and farmers that livestock will require protection from a large accumulation of snow or ice, a rapid drop in temperature, or strong winds.

VII. ICE AND SNOW

- A. Ice Storm - Freezing rain or drizzle is called an ice storm. Moisture falls in liquid form, but freezes upon impact.
- B. Sleet - Sleet is identified as frozen raindrops (ice pellets) that bounce when hitting the ground. Sleet in sufficient depth causes hazardous driving.
- C. Snow - Snow in a forecast without qualifying words such as occasional or intermittent means that the snowfall is of a steady nature, and will continue for several hours.
- D. Snow Flurries - Snow falling for short durations of time at intermittent periods. One of the problems with snow flurries is that most frequently visibility is greatly reduced. Accumulations from snow flurries are generally small.
- E. Snow Squalls - are brief, intense falls of snow and are comparable to summer rain showers. Usually accompanied by gusty surface winds.
- F. Blowing and Drifting Snow - is used in forecasts where loose snow on the ground or falling snow or both is being blown about to a degree that horizontal visibility is greatly restricted. After a substantial snow has ended and strong winds start blowing and the snow is whipped up from the ground this is referred to as a ground blizzard.
- G. Blizzards - are the most hazardous and perilous of all winter storms. Characterized by low temperatures and by strong winds bearing large amounts of snow. Most of the snow accompanying a blizzard is in the form of fine, powdery particles of snow that are whipped up in such great quantities that at times visibility is only a few yards.

- VIII. ESFs that are likely to be involved in a winter storm emergency are: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 -- agency involvement will vary with the circumstances of each incident.